

The Other Utah

Non-metro Focus

by Lecia Parks Langston

Government and the Non-Metro County

Government employment plays an important role in most of Utah's county economies. In 2002, the share of total employment contributed by the public sector ranged from 59 percent in Piute County to only 13 percent in Summit County with a state average of 18 percent.

For many non-metro counties, government is a major source of employment. This may seem paradoxical. After all, the headquarters of state government is located in Utah's largest county (Salt Lake). Plus, large contingents of federal and local government can be found in the metropolitan areas.

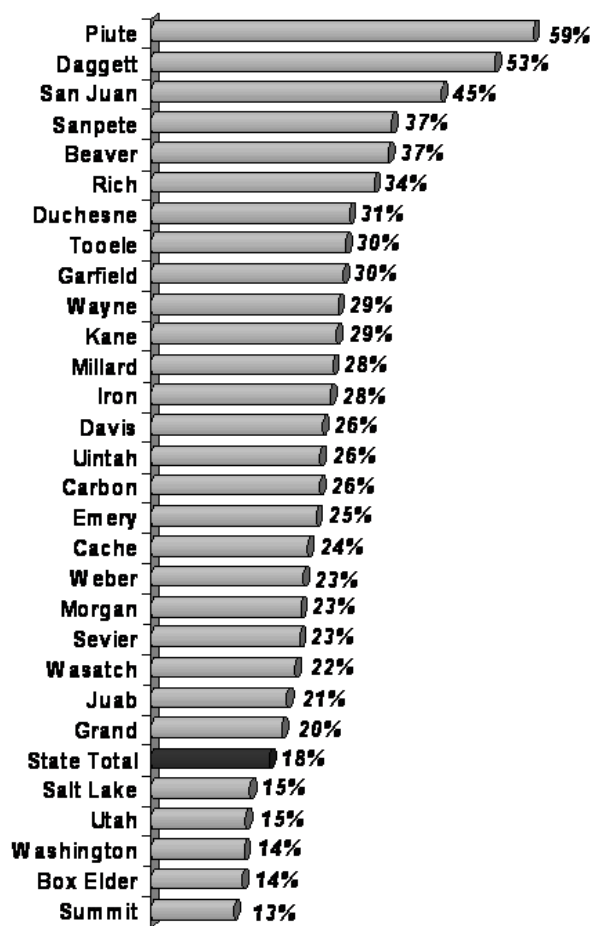
So, why does government account for the highest county share of employment in sparsely-populated Piute?

Size Counts

A strong correlation exists between a county's population and the share of government employment. Typically, the smaller the county's population, the higher the share of government employment.

For example, of the ten counties with the highest share of government employment, eight have populations of less than 15,000.

2002 Government Employment as a Percent of Total Nonfarm Jobs



Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services.

The remaining two counties (Tooele and Sanpete) with larger populations have significant government installations. For example, Sanpete County is home to both Snow College and the regional prison in Gunnison.

It's the Schools

This pattern of small county/large government presence can be easily explained in one word—education. Public schools, both elementary and secondary are included in local government. Add in higher education—Utah's public colleges, universities, and applied technology schools, and you can begin to see why government employment is so important in many non-metro counties.

For most counties outside the Wasatch Front, the local school district is the largest employer.

There are Exceptions

Then, there are those exceptions that “prove the rule.” Washington, Box Elder, and Summit counties have the lowest share of government employment—yet all are outside the Wasatch Front. In addition, Washington County is home to Dixie College and Zion National Park which should raise its government employment proportion. Interestingly, several of the non-metro counties with a lower-than-average share of government jobs have seen significant population growth in recent years.

For more information about Utah's non-metro counties go to:
<http://jobs.utah.gov/wi/regions/county.asp>

What's Up?

- ✓ **State economic developers agreed to offer a \$400,000 grant to Lozier Corp. of Omaha, Neb., to help persuade the privately held provider of retail store fixtures to add about 200 jobs in Cedar City. Members of the Board of Business and Economic Development, in approving the grant, declined to name Lozier or discuss any aspect of the company's request for grant money, citing a confidentiality agreement. The state also declined to name or discuss Cascades Inc., a Canadian company that has been approved for a \$150,000 grant. The company also may expand in Cedar City, adding about 100 jobs. Salt Lake Tribune, 7/2/03**
- ✓ **Wasatch County commissioners decided to proceed with a 60,000 square-foot, \$1.5 million events center at the Wasatch County Fairgrounds. The building would have a minimum of 1,500 seats and would be used for equestrian events, concerts, sporting events and community gatherings. Salt Lake Tribune, 6/11/03**
- ✓ **North Pacific Group Inc., a Portland, Ore.-based building products manufacturing and distribution company, plans to close its North Pacific Composite plant in Gunnison, eliminating 45 jobs. The closure will take place over the next three months and begin with an immediate partial reduction in force. Salt Lake Tribune, 6/4/03 2005. Vernal Express, 3/19/2003**